

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 02415 01 OF 02 161633Z

53

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-03

NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PA-01 PRS-01 /047 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 8352

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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ZSSELS 4067

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 02415

PASS SECSTATE PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UK, PINT

SUBJECT: MARGARET THATCHER: SOME FIRST IMPRESSIONS

REF: FLOYD-SPIERS TELCON FEBRUARY 14

1. WE UNDERSTAND DEPARTMENT IS PROVIDING SECRETARY WITH
BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON MARGARET THATCHER PRIOR TO HIS
MEETING WITH HER FEBRUARY 18. HERE ARE OUR INITIAL
IMPRESSIONS OF BRITAIN'S NEWEST POLITICAL STAR. AS OF
POSSIBLE SUPPLEMENTARY INTEREST WE ARE ALSO REPEATING
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PAGE 02 LONDON 02415 01 OF 02 161633Z

LONDON 2201 TO GENEVA.

2. MARGARET THATCHER HAS BLAZED INTO NATIONAL PROMINENCE ALMOST LITERALLY FROM OUT OF NOWHERE. WHEN SHE FIRST INDICATED THAT SHE INTENDED TO STAND AGAINST TED HEATH FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, FEW TOOK HER CHALLENGE SERIOUSLY AND FEWER STILL BELIEVED IT WOULD SUCCEED. SHE HAD NEVER BEEN A MEMBER OF THE INNER CIRCLE OF TORY POWER BROKERS, AND NO POLITICIAN IN MODERN TIMES HAS COME TO THE LEADERSHIP OF EITHER MAJOR PARTY WITH SUCH A NARROW RANGE OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE. NOW SUDDENLY, AFTER WHAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS HER "DARINGLY SUCCESSFUL COMMANDO RAID ON THE HEIGHTS OF THE TORY PARTY," SHE HAS BECOME THE FOCUS OF UNUSUALLY INTENSIVE MEDIA AND POPULAR INTEREST.

3. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG FRIENDS AND CRITICS ALIKE THAT SHE IS AN EFFECTIVE AND FORCEFUL PARLIAMEN- TARY PERFORMER. SHE HAS A QUICK, IF NOT PROFOUND, MIND, AND WORKS HARD TO MASTER THE MOST COMPLICATED BRIEF. SHE FIGHTS HER CORNER WITH SKILL AND TOUGHNESS, BUT CAN BE FLEXIBLE WHEN PRESSED. IN DEALING WITH THE MEDIA OR WITH SUBORDINATES, SHE TENDS TO BE CRISP AND A TRIFLE PATRONIZING. WITH COLLEAGUES, SHE IS HONEST AND STRAIGHT- FORWARD, IF NOT EXCESSIVELY CONSIDERATE OF THEIR VANITIES. CIVIL SERVANTS AT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION FOUND HER AUTOCRATIC. SHE HAS THE COURAGE OF HER CONVICTIONS, AND ONCE SHE HAS REACHED A DECISION TO ACT, IS UNLIKELY TO BE DEFLECTED BY ANY BUT THE MOST PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS. SELF-CONFIDENT AND SELF-DISCIPLINED, SHE GIVES EVERY PRO- MISE OF BEING A STRONG LEADER.

4. EVEN BEFORE HER GREAT LEAP UPWARD, MRS. THATCHER HAD BEEN THE PERSONIFICATION OF A BRITISH MIDDLE CLASS DREAM COME TRUE. BORN THE DAUGHTER OF A GROCER, SHE HAD BY DINT OF HER OWN ABILITIES AND APPLICATION WON THROUGH, SECURING SCHOLARSHIPS TO GOOD SCHOOLS, MAKING A SUCCESS OF HER CHOSEN CAREER, AND MARRYING ADVANTAGEOUSLY. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THEN THAT SHE ESPOUSES THE MIDDLE CLASS VALUES OF THRIFT, HARD WORK, AND LAW AND ORDER, THAT SHE BELIEVES IN INDIVIDUAL CHOICE, MAXIMUM FREEDOM FOR

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PAGE 03 LONDON 02415 01 OF 02 161633Z

MARKET FORCES, AND MINIMAL POWER FOR THE STATE. HERS IS THE GENUINE VOICE OF A BELEAGUERED BOURGEOISE, ANXIOUS ABOUT ITS ERODING ECONOMIC POWER AND DETERMINED TO ARREST SOCIETY'S SEEMINGLY INEXORABLE TREND TOWARDS COLLECTIVISM. SOMEWHAT UNCHIVALROUSLY, DENIS HEALEY HAS DUBBED HER "LA PASIONARIA OF MIDDLE CLASS PRIVILEGE."

5. HAVING COME TO THE LEADERSHIP AS THE CANDIDATE OF

THE RIGHT WING OF HER PARTY, MRS. THATCHER IS ALREADY
MOVING, IN THE TRADITION OF ALL GOOD LEADERS, TO BROADEN
HER BASE OF SUPPORT AND UNIFY THE PARTY BEHIND HER.
GREAT INTEREST ATTACHES TO THE SELECTION OF HER SHADOW
CABINET ISEXPECTED WITHIN THE WEEK, FOR THE FIRST CLUES
AS TO THE SHAPE AND DIRECTION SHE INTENDS TO GIVE THE
PARTY.

6. UNFORTUNATELY FOR HER PROSPECTS OF BECOMING A
NATIONAL, AS DISTINCT FROM A PARTY, LEADER, SHE HAS OVER
THE YEARS ACQUIRED A DISTINCTIVELY UPPER MIDDLE CLASS
PERSONAL IMAGE. HER IMMACULATE GROOMING, HER IMPERIOUS

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PAGE 01 LONDON 02415 02 OF 02 161629Z

53

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 02415

MANNER, HER CONVENTIONAL AND SOMEWHAT FORCED CHARM,

AND ABOVE ALL HER PLUMMY VOICE STAMP HER AS THE
QUINTESSENTIAL SUBURBAN MATRON, AND FRIGHTFULLY ENGLISH
TO BOOT. NONE OF THIS GOES DOWN WELL WITH THE WORKING
CLASS OF ENGLAND (ONE-THIRD OF WHICH USED TO VOTE
CONSERVATIVE), TO SAY NOTHING OF ALL CLASSES IN THE
CELTIC FRINGES OF THIS ISLAND.

7. THESE ARE STILL EARLY DAYS THOUGH. UNLESS THE
ECONOMY GOES EVEN MORE CATASTROPHICALLY AWRY AND THE
GOVERNMENT LOSES A SERIES OF BY-ELECTIONS, MRS. THATCHER
IS UNLIKELY TO FACE A GERERAL ELECTION FOR THREE OR
FOUR YEARS. IF SHE IS EVER TO BECOME BRITAIN'S FIRST
WOMAN PRIME MINISTER, SHE MUST USE THAT TIME TO HUMANIZE
HER PUBLIC IMAGE AND BROADEN THE BASE OF HER PARTY'S
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PAGE 02 LONDON 02415 02 OF 02 161629Z

APPEAL. THE ODDS ARE AGAINST HER, BUT AFTER HER STUN-
NING ORGANIZATIONAL COUP D'ETAT THIS PAST MONTH, FEW
ARE PREPARED TO SAY SHE CAN'T DO IT.

8. FOOTNOTE: MRS. THATCHER HAS HAD NO REAL EXPERIENCE
IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HAS GIVEN NO EVIDENCE OF ANY
INTEREST IN THE FIELD. NOW THAT SHE IS PARTY LEADER,
THIS WILL OF COURSE HAVE TO CHANGE. SHE IS WELL DISPOSED
TOWARD THE UNITED STATES, AND HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE
VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP
FOR SEVERAL YEARS. SHE SPENT ONE MONTH IN THE U.S.
IN 1967 AS AN INTERNATIONAL VISITOR GRANTEE.

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